MIRAMICHI POET

Six Poems

by

Hedley Parker

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A New Brunswick Museum Publication

Reprinted 1980

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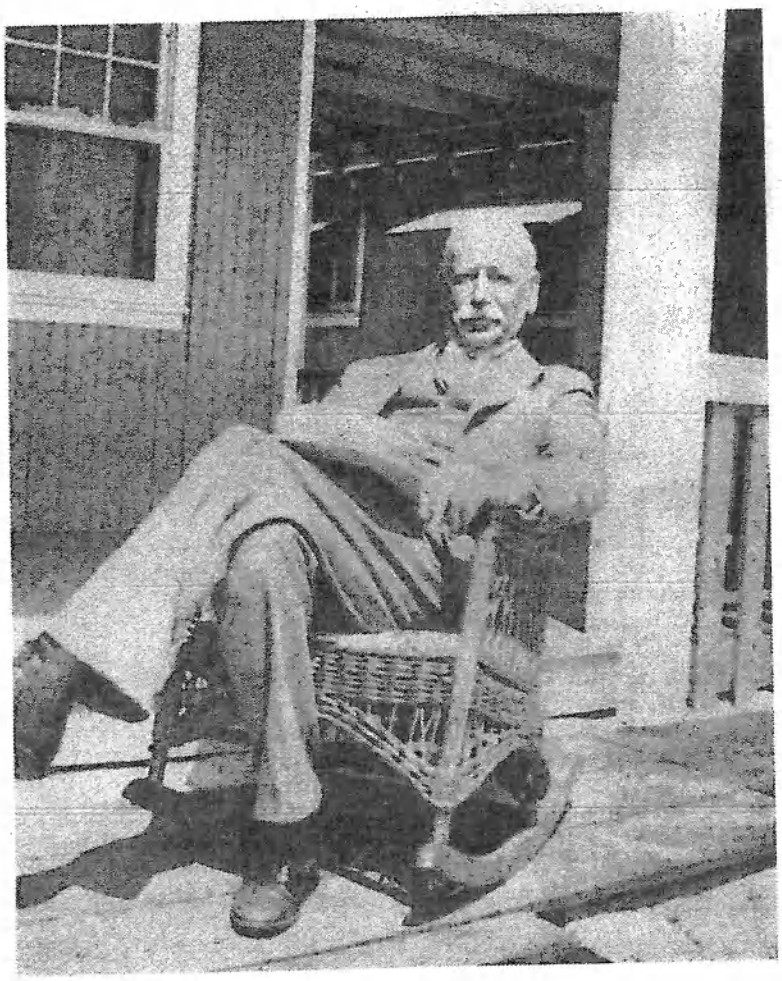

HEDLEY PARKER

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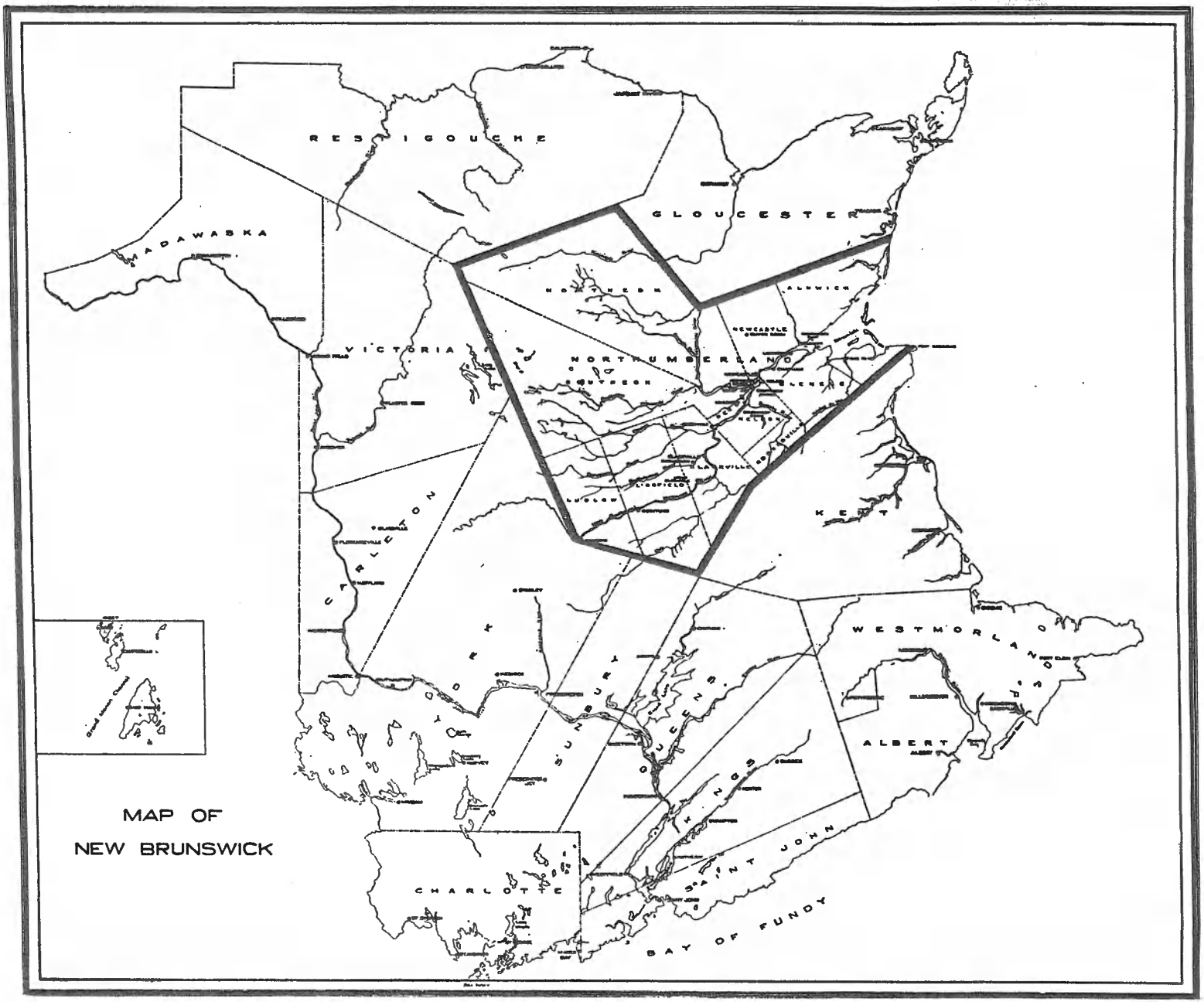
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BAY OF FUNDY
MAP OF
NEW BRUNSWICK

Introduction by Lord Beaverbrook

To introduce this edition of the poems of Hedley Parker to the public is, for me, not simply an honour. It is an obligation which I owe to one who has afforded me immense pleasure in life.

I have known Hedley Parker's poems since childhood, perhaps even early childhood. Their rhymes and images are part of the most deeply rooted memories I have cherished throughout all the wider reading of later years.

In the days to come, they will, I am convinced, be equally familiar to a vastly wider public. For Hedley Parker is a neglected poet. His work has never received the attention that his genius deserved.

The poems were written at a time when Canada was exacting from her people very great exertions, all of them necessarily concentrated upon the development of the country. The time for poetry, for the things of the mind, appeared to lie in the future.

So Hedley Parker worked in neglect and obscurity, his poems reaching only a few here and there.

It is a fate which many fine poets have suffered in other lands. Nothing is stranger than the uncertain hand with which fame is distributed among men.

Some favoured few are recognised instantly. Their talent meets early acceptance. They do not have to wait on the long ungrateful years to slip by before the admiration of their fellow men is kindled. For others, often the best of all, life holds a harsher fate.

Hedley Parker was one of these.

Yet it is sure that, in the end, there will be a sound understanding of his worth. It may even be that this collection which Canada owes to the pious energy of Howard Robinson, will prove to be the critical event establishing, at last, among his own people, the reputation and the memory of Hedley Parker.

(*Signed*) BEAVERBROOK.

HEDLEY PARKER

A Brief Memoir of His Life and Times

HEDLEY S. VICARS PARKER was born in Derby (near Millerton), Miramichi, in 1856, the son of William and Ellen (Spratt) Parker. Like so many sons of pious Methodist families, he was named for that "good soldier" and staunch evangelist, Captain Hedley Vicars.

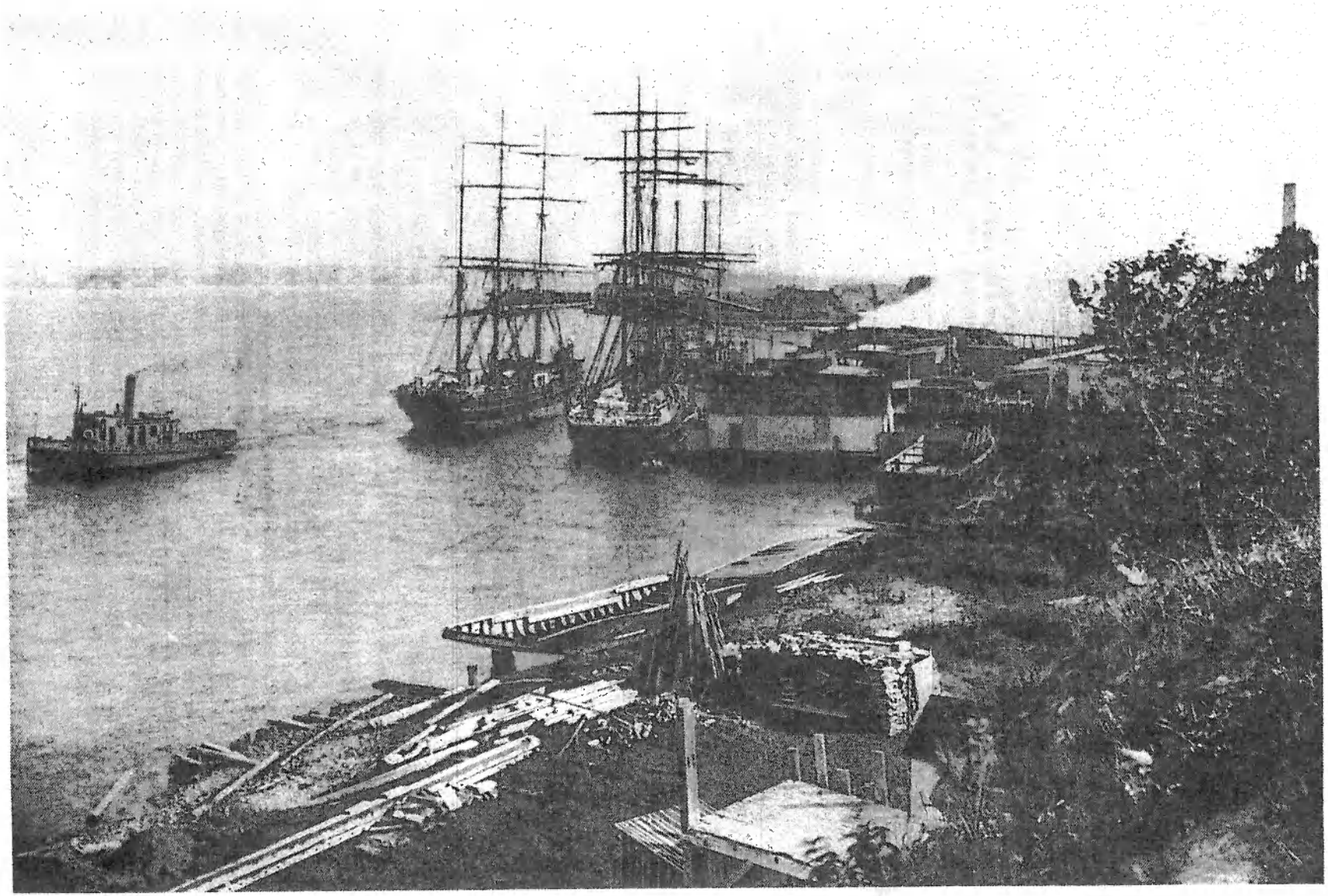
William Parker was Deputy Collector of Customs for the Port of Newcastle, and when Hedley was still a young child, he moved with his family to that town. Ellen Spratt was the daughter of a Methodist minister. Three daughters and two sons were born to them, Olivia, Elizabeth, Herbert (who died in his early 30's), Hedley, and Ella. It was a sternly religious household in which Hedley grew up, and his school life was equally strict. His schoolmaster when he was in his teens was John Harper from Scotland, principal of Harkins Seminary in Newcastle, who gave his scholars a formal education in Latin, mathematics and "memory work", and insisted on absolute obedience.

The Parkers were a warmhearted and affectionate family, devoted to each other, kind and generous to their friends and neighbors. Hedley never forgot a friend. When he was a baby, his life was saved by his nurse, Margaret Ann Howe, who extinguished a spark from the fire, which fell into his cradle. From the time Hedley could walk, until Margaret Ann's death, over sixty years later, gifts every Christmas, and many thoughtful kindnesses showed his lifelong devotion.

There was a romantic and literary strain somewhere in the Parker family. William Parker's library was a good sound "gentleman's library" in the old tradition, with Plutarch and Plato and Homer, Scott's novels and Byron's poetry, in addition to the usual theological books. There was a copy of the Koran and Paley's Evidences, and a fine edition of Knight's Shakespeare. Olivia, the oldest daughter, taught school in Millerton and Newcastle, and wrote a novel, which she shrank from giving to the world, and the family destroyed it in accordance with her dying wish.

The family were all "great readers", and were fond of reciting poetry. Elizabeth could sing come-all-ye's in the "quavering banshee" style. Ella knew Wordsworth, Longfellow and Tennyson by heart. Hedley early absorbed the romantic color of the life around him — the "good old days", when "two logs made a thousand", were vanishing as he grew up, but Duffy Gillis still roamed the streets and told grand stories of bygone years, and the "portashin' crowd" still foregathered at Colepaugh's. When Hedley was a child there were still men living whose fathers had told mysterious tales of William Davidson, the Miramichi pioneer, and who had known Francis Peabody, the founder of Chatham. The older people talked often of the red October night in 1825 when the Miramichi Fire devastated the whole countryside, of the great days of Cunard and Gilmour, Rankin & Co., and of the shipbuilding.

In the 1860's there was still shipbuilding in Miramichi, but long lumber was the rising industry. There were roaring times in Newcastle, when the men came off the drives to spend their winter's earnings in a week's glorious spree. There were riotous summer nights when sailors from the square-rigged ships in port thronged the streets, in drunken hilarity, and eight policemen patrolled the town, and were not enough. A strange contrast to the Parkers' quiet Methodist home, with its studious children and devout parents. Hedley absorbed the best of both worlds. He felt the deep religious feeling and real goodness behind that



RITCHIE'S WHARF AND THE NEWCASTLE WATERFRONT IN HEDLEY PARKER'S DAY

(Photograph by Ole Larsen, Newcastle, in the Collection of J. Leonard O'Brien, South Nelson)

strict upbringing, and he realized the true worth of those rough men who "pushed the forests back", and made a settlement out of a wilderness. He loved Miramichi, and he loved the songs and ballads its people sang. The narrative poem in ballad form played a large part in the early life of the community. It was opera, theatre and newspaper to its hearers. There were the tales of local happenings in the come-all-ye's of the lumber camps, and old Scottish ballads like Lord Lovel and the Gipsy Davy were sung at social gatherings. Like most primitive communities, Miramichi found that narratives slipped easily into the ballad metre, and could be sung to the old tunes. When Hedley turned his hand to verse, it was natural that it should be of this type.

Hedley Parker was seventeen when his father died, and in his early twenties he went to New York City, where a cousin had preceded him, and found work in a newspaper office. Hedley's first job was as a compositor on James Gordon Bennett's *Herald,* and he always kept up his connection with the typographical side of newspaper work. When he died in 1935 he was a member in good standing of Typographical Union No. 6.

After a few years as a compositor, Hedley joined the *Herald's* editorial staff. He used to say that when the managing editor asked him what he knew about, he said "Lumber and ships" — since the last tree in New York City had been cut down twenty years before, he was put to work on the Shipping page. He became Marine Editor of the *Herald* when it carried two full pages of ship news every day, with its own cable service and despatch boats to secure the data. Hedley Parker's desk at the old *Herald* in Herald Square was the meeting place for shipmasters and seamen from all over the world; their mail was sent in his care, and they called to see him as soon as their ships reached port. From his long association with marine affairs, he acquired the title of "Captain" Parker, by which he was known in the shipping and newspaper world of New York. When the *Herald* was absorbed by the *New York Tribune*, Hedley went to the *Sun,* from which he was on leave of absence at the time of his death. He was Marine Editor of the *Herald* and the *Sun* for a total of forty-nine years. For over thirty years he cabled a daily report on marine affairs in America to Lloyds' in London.

During one year's leave of absence, due to illness, in his thirties, Hedley Parker came home to Newcastle, and edited the small local weekly, the *Union Advocate,* with great gusto. In 1899 he wrote *The Days of Duffy Gillis,* and in 1902, *The Man Behind the Boathook,* in which he has caught and fixed the rhythm of Miramichi life and speech, with vividness and a touch of gentle humor.

Shortly before his return to New York, he married Maud Williston, daughter of Judge Williston of Newcastle, who survived him by a few years. Almost every year the Parkers returned for a holiday to their beloved Miramichi, Hedley revisited the scenes of his youth, spent much time roaming the woods, and fishing in his native streams. In later years Hedley and his two surviving sisters, Elizabeth and Ella, became deeply interested in Spiritualism, and were happy in their belief that they communicated with their departed relatives.

If Hedley Parker wrote any more poems than the six here printed, I have not been able to find them, but these show his kindly spirit, his generous enthusiasms, and his deep love for his native Miramichi as well as a hundred could do. While we may wish there had been more ballads from his pen, we are sure he could never have written better ones. They are a fine tribute to the country he loved so well, and they and their author will long be held in affectionate remembrance by the people of Miramichi.

LOUISE MANNY

Newcastle, N. B.,
September, 1946.

A SOU' WEST IDYLL

To the Editor of the *Advance*:

(After reading the *Rhapsody on the Miramichi* in the last *Advance*, my muse, stirred by memories of other days, got working unbeknownst to me, and evolved a "rhap" of its own, which I send to you, knowing your readers are patient and long-suffering. As Kipling is laid by for the present, it is only right perhaps that some of us should continue to lift up the White Man's Burden with memories of the past — Lest We Forget, Lest We Forget! So here's a "Come-all-ye" written with one hand, by one who worked five years on the Dungarvon, and never wore a linder.)

THE DAYS OF DUFFY GILLIS

(A LAMENT IN G MINOR)

Come all you jolly lumbermen
  Whose better years have fled,
And I will sing of halcyon days
  Before we had Confed.
When two logs made a thousand,
  Our country at its best,
In the days of Duffy Gillis
  From the Sou-ou-West.

When title to respect was writ
  Upon each horny hand,
And the man who swung a broadaxe
  Was a power in the land.
We catch the gleam of greatness yet
  From those now gone to rest,
In the days of Duffy Gillis
  From the Sou-ou-West.

Then all the land was happy,
  And none were known to beg.
'Twas molasses by the puncheon
  And Jamaica by the keg;
In every home a pork-barrel,
  On every table tea,
And you couldn't find a growler
  From Decantlin's to the sea.

The pigs weighed 'leven hundred,
  The ships were on the stocks,
And everything we wanted
  We got right down at Loch's.
And they charged it up against us,
  Without a fear or frown,
For they knew they'd get their money
  Whene'er the logs came down.

We did not drive in buggies then
  With horse of dubious breed,
But Concords rattled o'er our roads
  Behind the Morgan steed;
We got along at slower pace,
  For bikers weren't the rage—
If we went on a pleasant trip
  We rode in Duncan's stage.

No Scott Act then forbade us chase
The cobwebs from our throats;
We didn't stay awake at night
A-worrying over notes.
And all the cash we needed then
Was carried in our vest,
For the merchant touched the button,
And the due-bill did the rest.

We got our three square meals a day,
And asked for nothing else,
And always had a quiet sneer
For men who dined on smelts.
'Twas good old pork and flap-jacks,
Swamp-soggin' if you choose,
With a Labrador for breakfast
And two oblong Island blues.

Oh, Time! thy hand is cruel,
And the burden of thy years
Is pressing with a vengeful weight
In sighs and doubts and fears,
And sorrow's strain is now the chord
Where once thy music led,
And almost from the sky of life
The bow of hope has fled.

But I'll forgive the winds of fate,
And turn to meet the blast,
If from thy bounty thou wilt spare
Some moments of the past.
Before you grind this discord out,
Before you weave the shroud,
Just one more night at Colepaw's
With the old portashin' crowd.

Where we always fed our horses,
And put up for the night,
And gathered 'round the fireplace
With birch logs blazing bright.
And got to swapping stories
Till the tablecloth was spread,
When we'd all set in to supper
And reach to for the bread.

How hunger seemed to flee before
Those dishes boiled and fried,
With spruce beer for a chaser
And colcannon on the side.
'Twas help yourself to stoggin'
And cut and come again—
You couldn't pass no small dish off
On McInerney's men.

The supper done, again we'd sit
  Around the blazing hearth,
And send the smokewreaths curling up
  From woodstocks black as earth,
And some would read the *Gleaner*
  Before the backlog's flame,
And we'd talk Confederation,
  And the wondrous "Quaybec Skame".

Then one from out the company,
  With lusty lungs and strong,
Would give out a good Come-all-ye
  'Bout ninety verses long.
Weird as a Chopin nocturne
  Came the quavers from his throat,
And every climax rounded
  By a trembling banshee note.

Then we'd pass around the bottle,
  And each man would take a swig,
And we'd welt the hardwood timbers
  While the fiddle played a jig.
When we broke into a hornpipe
  You could hear our pulses beat,
And the faster passed the bottle,
  The faster went our feet —

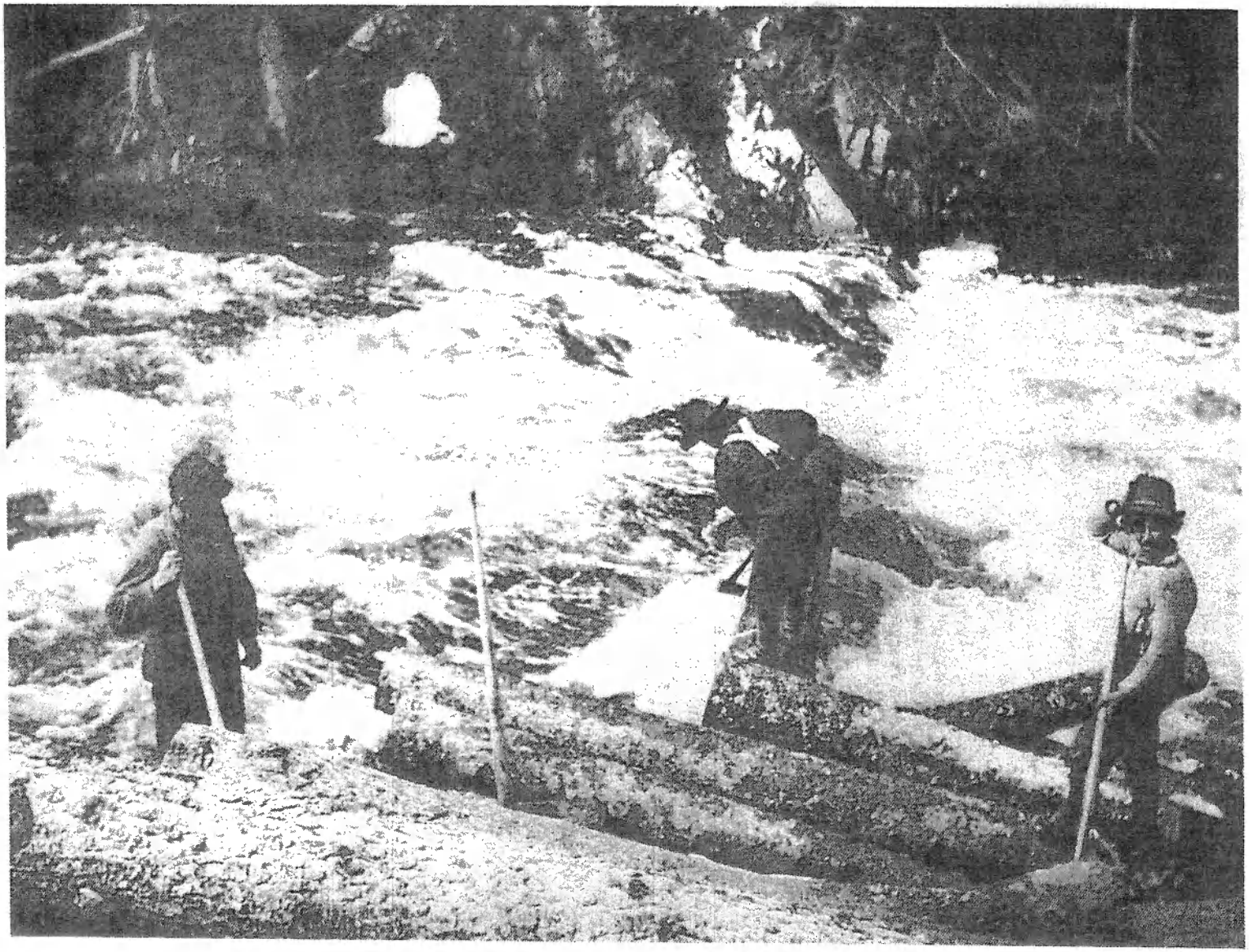
Till with shouts that shook the rafters
  Echoed through the Covered Bridge,
And made the snowdrifts tremble
  On the Semiwagan Ridge,
We'd loosen up our jumpers grey,
  A deeper draught we'd take,
And 'twas "hold the light, McCarty"
  Till we made Dungarvon shake!

But gone are all the portash men,
  And gone the swampers too,
And gone the hearth at Colepaw's
  With its welcome warm and true;
And gone the good Jamaica,
  Swamp-soggin' and the rest,
And the glory is departed
  From the Sou-ou-West.

But where'er her sons are scattered,
  There still the past intrudes;
Whether in the city's maddening rush,
  Or Minnesotty's woods,
And down the glint of memory
  Like a vision from the west
Come the days of Duffy Gillis
  From the Sou-ou-West.

EXILE.

New York, April 9, 1899.



CUTTING A KEY LOG

(Photograph owned by Mrs. C. D. Manny, Newcastle)

THE SONG OF THE SMELT

(N. Y. SUN)

Oh, the wintry blasts are o'er, and there's moisture on the pane;
The sluggish hills have pushed their brows above the drifts again.
Brook unto brook is uttering speech long sealed by winter's snows,
And 'round the south end of the barn a kindlier radiance glows.
The sap is climbing upward, and we see on every hand
That Nature's still in business at the same old cosmic stand;
And we're watching, and we're longing, while the ice gorge slowly melts,
And we're leaning on our scoop-nets, and we're laying for the smelts.

The currant loaf of Christmas has long since passed away;
The doughnuts and the mince-pie too have also had their day.
The pork-barrel has an empty clank as we jab into the brine
For the solitary hunk of fat, the last of all its line.
The liver and the bacon's gone, the toothsome herring too,
And there's almost nothing now but ham and eggs to see us through:
But that which springs eternal brings us cheer if nothing else,
For we'll soon be charging bagnets, and going for the smelts.

If you saw us in the summer time when gentler breezes blow,
You might think we lack in hustle, and be apt to call us slow:
That we kind of slacked the traces, and were laggards in the race,
And the time of cold molasses was the record of our pace.
But you ought to see our temper when old winter lifts her yoke,
And we moisten up our hardy hands to pull a get-there stroke;
Oh, there's shouting on the kopjes and there's laughter on the veldts,
When the ice-jam is a-moving and the river's full of smelts.

When the lustrous scoop-net flashes, and the pole vaults through the blue,
And the surge of rushing waters breaks against the log canoe,
Then we just unslip our braces and let out another loop
And a livelier kind of iris forms around the Sou'-West whoop.
O Spring! we love thy breezes! thy shady dells and bowers,
The wild notes of thy song-birds and the love tales of thy flowers,
But that which makes the thrill of joy creep down beneath our belts
Is the few short days you bring us when we masticate the smelts.

Dungarvon River, N. B., April 10.

DUNGARVON'S CONTINGENT IS READY

We're a peaceful lot of people,
  And we only kill the moose,
And hunt the roving caribou,
  Or sometimes "shootem goose",
But now the fur is rising up
  Along Dungarvon's back,
For our Country's flag is drooping,
  And our Empire's on the rack.

We can hear the bugle sounding,
  And there's War talk in the air,
And we read of bloody battles
  And we want to have our share.
So we're edging up our crooked knives
  With whetstones on our lap,
We've had pork and beans all winter,
  And we're spoiling for a scrap.

And up and down our county line,
  From Boiestown to 'Scuminac,
We see men rolling up their sleeves
  And humping up their back.
And the Captain of our Battery
  Sniffs the battle from afar,
And is raising of his plumage
  Just like Henry of Navarre.

For they tell us that the Empire
  Is fast falling to decay,
That old England's power is waning,
  And that Britain's had her day.
The hairy man from Africands
  Has got them on the gaff,
And other nations standing by
  Are giving us the laugh.

E'en the man down at the Bridge,
  Who was always kind and free,
And liked to soothe a brother's woe
  Since the days of Hardy Lee,
E'en he is backing up the Boers
  And saying in his prayers,
That they've got old Joshua's banners,
  And the Land of Canaan's theirs.

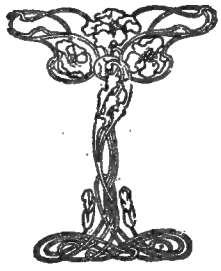
And it sets our blood to boiling
  As we look adown the years,
And note the swath of Empire cut
  Behind the British cheers;
And see the land of liberty
  And right and law and such,
All brought up to a standstill
  By the blarsted lop-eared Dutch.

If sauerkraut and bologna
  Are to lead the hopes of man,
Where roast beef and plum pudding
  Have been always in the van,
If they must place a sausage wreath
  Around Victoria's brow,
By the great Dungarvon Whooper,
  We want to know it now.

So wire us when you want us,
  And we gamble we'll be there,
With bread-crumbs in our whiskers,
  And hayseed in our hair.
But our arms are strong for battle
  And our spirits light as dew,
And our hearts against our jumpers
  Will beat loyally and true.

Then fling that banner over us,
  The grand old Union Jack,
That doesn't oft put up a bluff
  And have to take it back.
We want no gilded lace or straps,
  No bugle call or fuss,
Just place us on the firing line
  And leave the rest to us.

Dungarvon River, Feb. 1, 1900.



THE MAN BEHIND THE BOATHOOK

(THE BREAKING OF THE SOUTHWEST BOOM IN 1881)

Along the banks at break of day,
  The dismal echoes woke,
With cries that thrilled the country round,
  "The Sou' West Boom is broke!"
And pent-up millions, freshet raged,
  Impatient to be free,
Were bursting bonds of boom and block
  And charging for the sea.

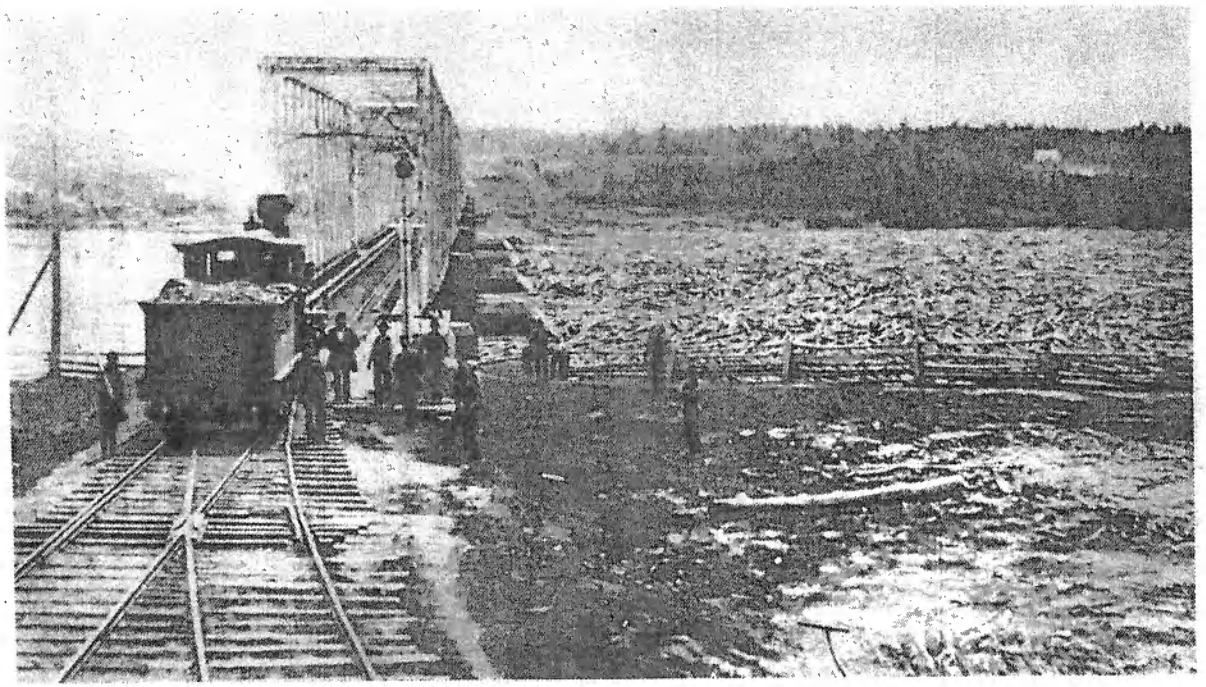
Then loosened from their human curb,
  With avalanche's pride,
A surging mass of spruce and pine
  Came rushing down the tide.
And people thronged with saddened hearts
  The direful scene to view,
Their bread is on the waters now,
  And all their butter, too.

One hope remained, one desperate chance,
  The wild stampede to check,
The railroad bridge that stood below
  Might stay the country's wreck.
So loud command of Robinson
  Along the River ran:
To Jack McCarty, "Pick a crew
  And meet them at the span!"

But on they swept in millioned might
  A dark, rebellious train;
And scorning power of puny man
  "As tempest scorns the chain",
In brigades, squadrons and platoons,
  And long-extended flank,
With battle line thrown out afar,
  And charging rank on rank.

To rip a watery furrow through
  That angry, seething rush,
To plug it with some lengths of boom,
  And stop the maddened crush—
This is the work of men of might,
  Of sturdy will to do,
Of muscled arm and nimble foot,
  And lion-heart and true.

The sabre's flash, the bayonet's gleam,
  Have been ambition's fad,
And made the page of history look
  Like lobster factory ad;
But patriot zeal ne'er tenser feels
  'Mid cannon's boom and smoke,
Than when it thrills the brawny arm
  That backs a peavey's stroke.



LOG JAM AT THE SOU'WEST RAILWAY BRIDGE IN 1881, AT THE TIME THE SOU'WEST BOOM BROKE.

(Photograph by W. J. Williams of River du Loup, P.Q. and Campbellton, N.B., photographer to His Grace the Duke of Beaufort. Owned by Mrs. Holmes A. Frank of New York and Millerton, daughter of the late James Robinson)

So doff your hat, Horatius bold,
Of Roman bridge renown,
And you, Leonidas, brave Greek,
Go way back and sit down.
A new Thermopylae is here,
With heroes' wreaths to burn;
The man behind the boathook now
Is going to have his turn.

For these are men of strenuous mood,
Of broad and sinewed back;
Whose fathers spat upon their hands
And pushed the forest back.
Though death lurks ever in the flood,
It cannot turn such pluck
As broke the jam in '69,
When Fairley's drive was stuck.

And on they come, a wilful mob,
From Muzzrall's Brook set loose;
From fair Dungarvon, noble Cains,
And some from old Renous,
That classic stream whose poet's dreams
Have lit with Sapphic flame,
And weaved a wreath of epic worth
Around its sylvan fame.

With Snowball's legions leading on,
Outspread in proud array;
And Richards' swarthy hosts in trim
For frolic or for fray;
While Lynch's shaggy minions press
To hustle things along,
With Hutchison's and Ritchie's hordes,
A wild, tumultuous throng.

"Up, Guards, and at them!" Poised to charge,
A hundred boathooks gleam,
And flash a challenge in the sun
Across the swollen stream.
Olympian dust upon their brows,
Their braces dangling low,
Unjumpered all, a patriot band
Is rushing on the foe.

And now the battle's raging fast,
They're struggling for the span.
Although the odds are pressing hard,
A million to a man.
With whoop and jump and boathook thrust
A gap is opened wide,
And foot by foot a way is won
Across the raging tide.

They leap from rushing log to log,
Nor heed the current's roar;
They dash and splash, and lunge and plunge
The angry waters o'er.
Sunburn and brawn in combat joined
Against a forest's might—
This kind of stuff, in khaki clothes,
No mule stampede could fright.

A homespun phalanx thrown across
To thwart their country's doom;
While high above the strife is heard
The war-cry of the Boom.
Like the slogan of Macdonald,
Like the pibroch of Lochiel,
Rose the wild whoop of McCarty,
As he fiercely plunged his steel.

And flung with reckless strength about
The logs that barred his way,
As children toss with careless hand
Their playthings in their play.
While round about the torrent foamed,
And hissed its whitened spray,
Like glistening teeth of baffled wolves
When eager for their prey.

Come now, ye noble of the dead,
Of Fame's heroic crop,
From Grecian plains to Switzer hills,
On down to Spion Kop,
Who swiped the power from rulers' hands
Which tyrants feared to give,
And pressed the bounds of freedom back,
That struggling man might live,

Come from your misty, vasty depths
Of lands beyond our ken;
Come gather on this railroad bridge,
And watch these Sou' West men.
'Twill brighten up your dismal urns
Whene'er your spirits droop,
To see Jack Bryenton ride a log
And hear McCarty whoop.

The boom is swung, a joyous shout
Runs up the river side,
As sunset saw the conquered foe
Lie fretting in the tide.
The country saved, the hopes returned
That once seemed so remote;
Our wives can do their shopping now,
And man can meet his note.

When we gathered round at suppertime,
The table amply spread,
And heard the laugh of little ones,
So eager to be fed;
And felt how close a call they had
Of losing all their glee,
Their plum preserves and johnny-cake
And sweetnin' in their tea,

Ere we helped ourselves to pancakes,
Or we passed around the bread,
As we raised our hearts to Heaven
And the word of thanks we said,
We all mentioned Jack McCarty
And the Spartan crew he led.

Dungarvon, May, 1902.

THE WAIL OF THE SNOW-SHOVELLER

(Written on receiving from a friend a snapshot of March snowdrifts in Newcastle)

Come, Spring, and let thy breezes blow
  Across the fragrant hills,
And radio from purple slopes
  The litany of rills,
And loose the secret we would learn
  From vales where pansies grow,
I'm fed up on this wintry stuff,
  This everlasting snow.

From morn to night I'm bucking drifts,
  With aching back and low,
With wooden shovel on the job
  Of humping up the snow;
And only stop between the bumps
  To heave a tired sigh,
A weary puffing silhouette
  Against the evening sky.

The night but brings a short respite
  To mock me with her dreams,
The good old summer's here again,
  I'm wading in her streams.
And back at Pine Cliff's haunting pools
  I watch the rapids sweep,
I hear the tocsin of the reel,
  And see the salmon leap.

I wander through the scented woods,
  And feel a welcome there
From wisps of sunlight 'neath the trees
  And answer with a prayer.
I roam the vespered silences,
  Where brooding nature weaves
Her undertone of lasting peace
  Amid the whisperin' leaves.

And down along the silvery glades
  When evening shadows fall,
I catch the tomtit's plaintive song
  And hear the moosebird call.
And then a moan, a torturing shriek!
  I wake. Oh, cruel blow!
The North wind's holl'ring down the flue;
  "Turn out and shovel snow:"

I rush toward the window's light,
  And wipe the frosted pane,
And blast my bulging blooming eyes,
  The same thing o'er again.
For where I shovelled yesterday
  A struggling lump of woe,
Packed high and hard by Boreal blasts
  There's five feet more of snow.

Oh, Sisyphus, your comeback job
  Has nothing much on this,
I envy you your rolling stone,
  Though far away from bliss,
At least your hands and feet are warm,
  While striving there below.
I'll shove your rock at any time,
  If you will shovel snow.

How sad and drear the uplands lift
  Their brows where birches grow,
The everlasting hills beneath
  The everlasting snow.
They seem apart from Nature's fold,
  So alien and alone,
Amid the waste of patchless white
  And weary monotone.

But one small speck of cheering hope
  Comes hurtling through the glow,
The first-born of reluctant spring,
  A solitary crow.
I watched his black wing cleave the blue
  And scroll its ambling flight;
Like sable imp from darkened spheres,
  Doomed to a world of white.

Oh, cruel fate! Why was I placed
  In this niviculous clime,
With nought but wooden shovelling
  To pass away the time?
With aching limbs and chilblained feet
  And lashed by northern wind;
With Crocker ointment on in front,
  And Anodyne behind.

I do not seek the comfort now
  The Sunday sermon brings,
Nor want to sit in cushioned pew
  And list to heavenly things.
I wouldn't be an angel now;
  Just send me down below,
Where there are no wooden shovels,
  And there is no shovelling snow.

Newcastle, N. B., March 27th, 1923.

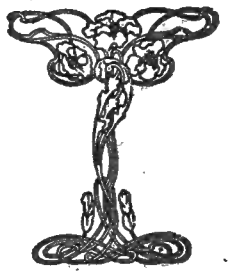
HEDLEY PARKER ON A FISHING TRIP IN 1911

(Snapshot owned by Mrs. C. D. Manny, Newcastle)

LAST POEM

If I die here in Brooklyn
  May Heaven protect me;
Let no foreign sycamore
  Over me wave.
I ask not to Greenwood's
  Cold shades to collect me,
Or grim chiselled marble
  Pillared over my grave.

But carry me back to the
  Few friends that love me;
Where the memories of boyhood
  Flow sacred and free;
And the angel-voiced zephyrs
  Shall whisper above me,
Shall mourn o'er the waters
  Of Miramichi.



LOCALISMS USED BY HEDLEY PARKER

A GLOSSARY AND NOTES

Advance, a newspaper published in Chatham, Miramichi, by D. G. Smith.

Anodyne, Johnson's patent liniment.

bagnet, square net, made like a bag, like the smelt nets used today.

boom and block, a boom for holding loose logs in storage consists of a series of logs linked together, making a chain of logs, which is fastened at intervals to permanent boom blocks, erected like small wharves in the river at the boundary line of a storage cove. This storage cove is also called a boom.

Bridge, man down at the, Edward Sinclair, prominent lumber operator, whose establishment was at the Nor' West Bridge. The locality was called "The Bridge", or "Bridgetown".

Bryenton, Jack, said to have been the real hero of the day when the Sou' West Boom broke. Tales are still told of Bryenton's legendary feats of log riding. He could balance on a twisting, rolling log, and travel down the river for many miles.

colcannon, the New Century Dictionary (1944) describes colcannon as an Irish dish made of cabbage or greens and potatoes, boiled and mashed together and seasoned, but on the Miramichi it was a dish made of a variety of vegetables, "the more vegetables the grander the dish". An old Irishman tells me that the base of colcannon was potatoes boiled in milk and seasoned with summer savory. It was popular at Christmas with a roast goose, "when we could get a goose". A lady of Scottish descent says it was always served in their home at Hallowe'en.

Colepaw's, properly Colepaugh's, a well known house up the Renous, a branch of the Main Sou' West Miramichi, up above what is now Quarryville. It was an inn for the woodsmen. The original Colepaugh is said to have been a Hessian soldier with the British during the American Revolutionary War. Mr. Ryan says he came from the Southern States and used to sing songs about the British soldiers.

come-all-ye, a ballad, usually sung in a high, wailing, quavering voice. So called because it began "Come all you" (jolly lumbermen), etc.

concord, an open wagon, with one long spring from front to back.

Confed, the Confederation of the British North American Provinces into the Dominion of Canada, in 1867. Confederation was often given as the cause for the economic depression of the Maritime Provinces in the 1860's and 1870's, and even later.

Crocker ointment, a very efficaceous liniment used by T. W. ("Tim") Crocker. It was a prescription by Dr. A. C. Smith, put up by E. Lee Street, druggist. It was highly praised by Mr. Crocker, and used by all his friends, and was always known as "Crocker's" liniment, or ointment.

crooked knife Fannie H. Eckstrom and Mary W. Smyth in the "Minstrelsy of Maine", 1927, describe this as a knife peculiar to Indians and hunters, intended to be drawn towards the user. It has a handle sharply bent away from the user, for a thumb-rest, and the blade, which is very narrow, is commonly, though not always, curved at the tip to one side, at right angles to the bend in the haft.

Decantlin's, famous roadhouse or inn kept by John DeCantelon, on the Sou' West River, between Upper Blackville and Doaktown.

due bill, workmen were paid by due bills, which could be exchanged for goods at the local stores (usually the company stores).

Duncan's stage, ran between Newcastle and Chatham. It was a rival of Ullock's stage.

Dungarvon shake, local tradition says that once a drive was "hung up" below the mouth of the Dungarvon, and there was a dance, during which a big Irishman shouted: "We'll make Dungarvon shake!" and the name clung to the river. It is said that the "Dungarvon turns" resemble those of the winding river Dungarvan in Ireland.

RIDING A LOG ON THE DRIVES

(Photograph owned by Mrs. C. D. Manny, Newcastle)

Dungarvon Whooper, a whooping ghost which is said to haunt the Dungarvon district. Travellers hear fearful howls, and if they follow the sound into the forest, they will be lost. The howls are said to be made by the ghost of a murdered lumber camp cook, and, according to one tale, there is also a smell of frying bacon to lure the victim. One of the first trains on the Fredericton line, with its shrill whistle, was named in derision for the ghost, and the train is still called "The Whooper".

Fairley, there were three big lumber operators in Boiestown, Jim, John and Justus Fairley.

Gillis, Duffy, a well known character in Hedley Parker's youth, who loved to tell tall stories of the "good old days". Mr. James Ryan, Senior, a contemporary of Hedley Parker's, remembers him as an old man around town when he was a young fellow. The poem, "The Days of Duffy Gillis", is here reprinted from the earliest version I have seen, in the "Union Advocate" for May 2, 1899. It is headed by a note to the Editor of the Advance, which has led some people to believe that Hedley Parker once worked in the lumber woods, but this is not the case.

Gleaner, a newspaper published by James A. Pierce in Chatham, 1829-67, and later until 1873. Not to be confused with the Fredericton "Gleaner", although the latter was named for it.

Hutchison, Richard Hutchison, prominent Douglastown lumber operator. He was the resident partner of Gilmour, Rankin & Co., and later took over the firm.

Island blues, Prince Edward Island potatoes.

jam of '69, a famous log jam on the Sou' West river. Mr. Ryan says most of the lumber went to sea that time. The river went out full, and a few of the logs were picked up on the islands down river.

Jamaica, rum.

jumper, heavy short coat, like the modern mackinaw.

Labrador, smoked herring.

Lee, Hardy, a "character" who lived about a mile and a half above Derby Junction. Mr. Ryan remembers a rhyme about him:

"Old Hardy Lee with cold oppressed,
Come in and said, I'm sore distressed,
It fails, my boasted sturgeon oil,
Give me Johnson's Anodyne,
From Sinclair's at the Bridge."

linder, undershirt.

Loch, William, born Edinburgh 1797, died Newcastle 1855; came to Miramichi in 1817. A prosperous merchant, and a fine public-spirited man, who left legacies to the Presbyterian Church and School of Newcastle.

logs came down, whene'er the, when the logs came down in the spring, the men were paid off for their season's work.

Lynch, Timothy, came from up around Boiestown, at one time a lumber operator on the St. John River, later on the Miramichi. It is said to have been Tim Lynch who stood off the Intercolonial Railway officials with a gun, when they arrived from Moncton to demand that the Railway Bridge be not endangered by being used as support for the temporary boom. Tradition says that Lynch aimed a gun at the officials, saying, "The man who touches that boom rope is a dead man!" So the officials left well enough alone, and returned to Moncton.

millions, i. e. millions of feet of lumber.

Minnesotty, many Miramichi lumbermen found their way to Minnesota when times were bad in New Brunswick.

Morgan, a famous breed of horses, descended from the Justin Morgan horse (born 1793), owned by Justin Morgan of Randolph, Vermont. The Justin Morgan horse was said to have been a son of True Briton, and a grandson of the great English horse, Traveler. His descendants were the sturdiest and most valuable horses known, for general use.

McCarty, Jack, Robinson's boss.

McInerney (or McIneary), two brothers who lived on Renous River, Mr. Ryan says he fished several winters with old John McIneary, but they "went to the wrong place always", and made no money. The brothers were also lumber operators.

peavey, short pole with a point and hook for catching and guiding logs, invented by a man named Joseph Peavey, a blacksmith of Stillwater, Minnesota, in 1858.

pigs weighed 'leven hundred, refers to the "winter of the big pig", about 1837. The big pig, raised up the Nor' West, weighed 1100 pounds or more after butchering. The carcass was hauled to Chatham on the ice, and had a salute of cannon fired in its honor.

portashin' crowd, the "portashers" were men who took the supplies by team from the company store house to the logging camps.

puncheon, large cask containing 90 gallons.

Quaybec Skame, the "Quebec Scheme", proposed by Quebec when the delegates met at Charlottetown in 1865 to discuss the union of the Maritime Provinces. Quebec suggested the union which is now Canada.

Renous, poet of the, Michael Whalen, to whom Hedley Parker pays a pleasant tribute.

Richards, Miramichi lumberman. Some give "old man Richards" the credit for standing off the Intercolonial officials with a gun, but Mr. Ryan thinks that Mr. Richards was a soft quiet-spoken man, and it was more likely Tim Lynch.

Ritchie, Robert and Allan Ritchie, well known lumber operators, who did business in Newcastle under the firm name of D. & J. Ritchie. Their parents came from Renfrewshire, the native district of James Gilmour, Alexander Rankin and Richard Hutchison. The Ritchies, say the old-timers, were the first men on the river to pay their men in money, before their time all was due bills.

Robinson, James, "The Boss", a large lumber operator, manager of the Sou' West Boom in 1881.

Scoop net, a net on a circular frame, like a landing net.

Scott Act, a law which, at local option, prohibited the sale of liquor, except by doctors' prescriptions. Liquor was, however, plentifully imported by private persons for their own use.

ships were on the stocks, refers of course to the days when shipbuilding was an important industry on the Miramichi.

smelts in the spring, spring was a time of scarcity, the provisions put down for the winter were exhausted, supplies could not be imported, for the roads were breaking up and impassable, and the rivers not yet open for navigation. In the hungry days of spring, the first run of smelts in Miramichi was like the manna of the Israelites.

Snowball, Jabez Bunting, Chatham lumber operator, later Senator and Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick. Mr. Snowball was one of the largest lumber producers in New Brunswick, and in 1881 his stumpage account was one-seventh of all the territorial revenue of the province.

Snow shoveller, Wail of the, this amusing poem was written in 1923, on receiving from a friend a snapshot of March snowdrifts in Newcastle.

Sou'west, the southwest branch of the Miramichi River.

span, section of a bridge.

spruce beer, liquor made from the first red buds of the spruce. It was made from an Indian recipe, and molasses was used in its manufacture.

stoggin', filling food. A phrase often used was that such and such food was "fine for stoggin' ".

swampers, men who clear temporary woods roads for winter hauling.

swamp-soggin', a heavy pudding. Mr. Ryan says it was made in a Dutch oven in front of a big fire, made of white flour, four to six inches thick, and served with molasses.

thousand, one thousand superficial feet, as lumber is measured.

war cry of the Boom, referring to the whoops with which the men performed their heroic task.

woodstocks, smokers' pipes.

APPENDIX

After the book containing Six Poems by Hedley Parker was in the press, another very interesting poem was discovered in the "Miramichi Advance" for September 27, 1900. Unsigned, it was obviously written by Hedley Parker, and worth including in this volume.

HAIL! THE NEW PREMIER

We've just been talking o'er the days, 'way back in '74
When you first joined with us, saying that free schools must have the floor,
When you faced us on the hustings, then you hardly met our whim,
With your white vest and blue necktie, standing up by Willliam Swim,
For you looked so young, and boyish, and unwrinkled as a doll;
We could hardly keep from laughing, 'cause you seemed so awful small.
But when the guff got started, we soon saw you had no lack
Of putting up a game of talk and great at sassin' back,
With Gough and Adams going well, you still were in the van,
As you talked of education and about the rights of man,
And flung your voice out good and loud, and hit them good and hard,
And we all were pleased to see the way the little fellow sparred.
And now you are our Premier, everything's within your reach,
And you've got to be the glossiest little pebble on the beach,
And we're with you,
So let us know your politics, and tell us of your plan,
And we're with you, Premier Lemuel, we're with you to a man.

And when A. G. wore the purple and was ruling by his beck,
And the southern tier of counties had their heel upon our neck,
When our bridges were neglected and our roadways full of slumps,
And the taxes were a-piling up upon our empty stumps,
Then, like Robichaud's lone buoy, you stood out upon the scene
And formed the only loyal opposition to the Queen.
It was "splendid isolation" and a struggle that was grand,
Till Blair came floundering through the drifts to take us by the hand,
For you led your county upward by a pathway jagged and steep,
And the stone that was rejected now's the biggest in the heap.
And you showed you were a fighter, and knew the time to shoot
With a gun a-dancing at each hip and razors in your boot.
And we're with you,
So let us know your politics, and tell us of your plan,
And we're with you, Premier Lemuel, we're with you to a man.

Our lumbermen are happier since you battled for their right,
And things are coming our way now, yes, coming "feather white".
New bridges span our rivers, and our roads fulfil our dreams;
There are creameries growing on our farms and grist mills on our streams,
And we're reaching, too, for pancakes made of Mill Cove patent brand,
And the curse of yellow meal will soon be lifted from our land;
And we're facing down the future with a faith that nought can smother,
With a Bible tight in one hand and a Biggle Book in t'other,
For the clouds will surely vanish since we've found out where we're at,
And there's better days a-coming now that Casey's at the bat.
And we're with you,
So let us know your politics, and tell us of your plan,
And we're with you, Premier Lemuel, we're with you to a man.

Dungarvon River, Sept. 15, 1900.

SPRING ON THE MIRAMICHI

(From the Miramichi Advance, April 26, 1900)

There's a fitting up of schooners,
  A gathering up of logs,
A clip and buzz of mill-saws
  And concerts by the frogs;
The steamer men are hustling,
  And the drives are on the way,
For Spring is here, and "get there"
  Is the order of the day.

(*Unsigned*)

NOTES

The New Premier. This poem was written when Lemuel J. Tweedie, of Chatham, became Premier of New Brunswick. A prominent figure in New Brunswick politics for many years, Mr. Tweedie was first elected to the New Brunswick Legislature in 1874, when he was 22 years old. When he became Premier, he had sat in the Legislature continuously for twenty-six years, with the exception of the four years, 1878-1882. He was Surveyor General in 1890, Provincial Secretary in 1896, Premier in 1900, later Lieutenant-Governor.

Free Schools, the big political issue in the years following 1874. Up to that time there were no free public schools — all scholars paid fees.

William Swim, of Doaktown, prominent Miramichi politician.

Gough, Jacob C. Gough, Hon. Peter Mitchell's stepson, prominent in New Brunswick politics.

Adams, Michael Adams, of Douglastown, prominent Miramichi politician, later Senator. It was "Mike" Adams who delighted his constituents with his slurs on Saint John people as "the hungry beggars by the sea".

So let us know your politics, an oblique reference to Mr. Tweedie's various changes in his political views.

A. G., Andrew G. Blair, who engineered the famous "Northumberland Deal", by which the four Northumberland County members, Burchill, O'Brien, Robinson and Tweedie, supported Blair (though not of his party) in exchange for stumpage rebates and other favors. The "Deal" was hotly condemned by political opponents, who objected to the advantages it conferred on the "Lumber Lords", but it benefited Northumberland County in the end.

taxes were a-piling up upon our empty stumps, refers to the high rate of stumpage charged by the Government, being a tax for each tree cut.

Robichaud's lone buoy, refers to Robichaud's buoy, near Sheldrake Island.

"feather white". Mr. A. S. Gremley, of Newcastle, says this expression is used on the lumber drives, "the stream is running feather white", i.e., running swiftly and foaming.

Mill Cove patent brand, flour ground at the Mill Cove Grist Mill, below Newcastle, owned by Mr. Charles E. Fish.

yellow meal, corn meal. For some reason it was considered on the Miramichi a disgrace to eat food made of corn meal, perhaps because it was cheap, and formed a staple article of the poor man's diet.

Biggle Book. The Biggle Books were, to quote their own advertisement, "a Farm Library of unequalled value—Practical, Up-to-date, Concise and Comprehensive —Handsomely Printed and Beautifully Illustrated, by Jacob Biggle". They were treatises on horses, small fruits, poultry, cows and swine, published by the "Farm Journal" of Philadelphia, and were highly esteemed by farmers.

Casey at the Bat, reference to the popular base-ball poem. Casey here symbolizes Premier Tweedie.